

Lyon 1976 - WP 63

Advanced Training, Assessment, Rating and Checking of ATCOs.

Introduction

Unfortunately, this cannot be a full report as had been anticipated when the questionnaire was sent to the various member associations (MAs) last year. Only thirteen members have answered to date - less than one third of the federation's strength. All percentages are percentages of returns received.

Advanced and Refresher Training

Although some associations mixed advanced training with refresher training, it was clearly evident both were considered essential. Thirty per cent already have some form of advanced training and 100 per cent consider it essential. Types of courses under the heading of advanced training that should be considered for implementation are as follows:

1. ATC Instructors
2. ATC Automation
3. SSR (when not included in ab-initio course)
4. ATC Supervisors including man-management
5. SAR (where SAR is the responsibility of civil authorities)
6. English (for controllers at international airports where English is not the home language)
7. Introduction of new type aircraft and/or procedures and equipment

Standing Committee V (SC V) consider all of the above courses, if applicable, should be conducted by the relevant authorities and it is in the interest of MAs to ensure their members are equipped with the correct knowledge and training on any advanced ATC factor.

Four countries are currently conducting refresher training of 1-2 weeks after periods of 1-6 years. Refresher training of all Air Traffic Controllers on basic ATC work is considered essential by all MAs who replied to the questionnaire. Analysis of returns indicate courses should be of 1-2 weeks duration and occur every 5 years and should be mandatory for all controllers. The following have been suggested as objectives of a basic refresher course:

- (a) Updating knowledge.
- (b) Interchange of personnel ideas.
- (c) Eradication of bad habits.
- (d) Interpretation of new procedures.
- (e) Practice in rarely used procedures.
- (f) Reinforcement of procedures and standards.

In view of varying legal liabilities between countries and the degree of blame apportioned to controllers in recent court hearings, SC V consider that all controllers should have the

opportunity of participating in advanced and refresher training, to enable them to be adequately prepared in all aspects. Refresher courses are particularly important to allow specialist tower or area controllers to update themselves on the other person's job, and therefore improve co-ordination functions.

ATC Checking

Only four MA's have any form of check control activities. The questionnaire was only answered vaguely and no positive indication of the need for this system was evident, although eight MA's expressed desirability in the system, and only one positively rejected the system. SC V would like to amplify one advantage of using a check control system. In Australia it has been found that by comparing an ATC check control system with the airline check pilot system, certain industrial gains were made. The system increased the responsibilities, status and consistent need for a good performance by Air Traffic Controllers to be more in line with airline pilot requirements, and thus made a good argument for salaries to be increased, using the comparison of ATC and airline pilot responsibilities as justification.

If the meeting considers further investigation should be conducted on this factor, a check control system could be examined in further depth during the ensuing year.

ATC Ratings

Although some MA's have slight variations from ICAO terminology as far as ratings are concerned, all respondents generally follow ICAO recommendations and ratings are issued after initial qualifications are gained. Generally there is no periodic re-rating programme applied.

All respondents, bar one, indicated that ratings lapse after a certain period of time if controllers do not exercise the privilege of the rating. The period of time varied from 14 days to 2 years with the average being 3 months. To safeguard all controllers it is suggested that IFATCA adopt a policy whereby a maximum period of absence be stipulated after which a rating lapses. A re-rating test both practical and theoretical should be conducted before exercising the privileges of the rating again. This would mean that if a controller proceeded on long service leave his practical and theoretical rating would need to be re-examined prior to resuming responsibility for his rating.

One practical example of the benefit gained from the above procedure could be that if a controller was involved in a court of inquiry after a break in service (e.g. leave etc.) his own personal interests would be safeguarded, if he had been re-rated prior to commencing duty. If no re-rating was conducted, he could be open to legal insinuations that his efficiency had decreased, and could be apportioned more blame than necessary, as this factor could be used to develop a 'scape-goat'.

ATC Assessing

All respondents indicated some form of ATC assessment was operative in their country. These assessments ranged from trainee assessments to assessments for promotion to supervisory level and for all stages in between. SC V considers that individual countries are entitled to direct

what type of assessments are required for their use, but certain factors pertaining to controller assessment may need an IFATCA policy decision.

Perusal of these assessments by controllers is carried out in 50 per cent of cases, although only 14 per cent have counselling sessions with the controller concerned. All respondents (some with minor limitations) indicate a desire that counselling sessions be conducted. If assessments are conducted, controllers should have the opportunity of sighting and, if necessary, discussing their assessments with the assessing officer. Controllers should be aware of their strengths, and if the assessing officer believes a controller has shortcomings, then the only way improvement can be achieved, is that these shortcomings be discussed with the controller at the time of assessment. Another important factor to be eliminated in an assessment process is one of personality. If controllers do not sight their assessments the assessing officer is at liberty to 'write-down' a controller at will.

SC V consider that all controller assessments should be sighted by the controller and opportunity be given for discussion between the assessing officer and the assessed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the requirement for advanced ATC training become IFATCA policy and that ICAO be notified of this policy together with types of suggested courses.

It is recommended that IFATCA policy indicate the need for ATC refresher courses of 1-2 weeks duration at least every five years and that ICAO be notified of this policy together with the objectives of such a course.

It is recommended that IFATCA policy indicate that a controller local rating becomes invalid after a maximum break in service of 6 months, and revalidation is necessary before resuming duty.

It is recommended that Member Associations should indicate to their employers that if assessments are conducted controllers must have the opportunity of sighting these assessments, and discussing them with the assessing officer. Additionally a controller must have the opportunity of registering, on the assessment form, his comments regarding the assessment and the manner in which it was carried out.

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